The Books of the Season and Their Authors.

The Men and Women Who Are Making the Anglo-Saxon Literature of Today----Mary Hartwell Catherwood and Her Historical Novels----"Lazarre" to Be Dramatized----Owen Wister's Novel.

The past season has been somewhat remarkable from a literary point of view, in that it has brought forth few, if any, great books, but an unusual number of good ones. In other words, while genius has been quiescent, talent has been exceedingly active, and that is good, so far as summer reading is concerned. When the thermometer is coyly hovering in the neighborhood of the century point, works of genius are not as pleasing as books which are merely clever, witty, brilliant, in a word, well written. The past season has been prolific of these, and in the process of packing one's trunk for summer outings there is large opportunity for the selection of agreeable works of fiction which have remained unread during the busy season.

"Lazarre."

The best of the historical novels of the year is, without much question, Mary Hartwell Catherwood's "Lazarre," and as this has been dramatized for production next season, it will probably have a second year of popularity greater than its first. Mrs. Catherwood is a novelist who deserves a much wider reading than she has yet had in America. Her historical romances are altogether the best collection of such books to be found in American fiction. She has hitherto dealt almost entirely with Canada and the Northwest during the settlement of those regions by the French. Her first and one of her best novels, "The Romance of Dollard," and subsequent books entitled "The White Islander," "The Story of Tonty," "The Chase of St. Castin" (a book of short stories), as well as her last and most ambitious work, "Lazarre," are along this line. She has moreover written one of the most charming juvenile stories in our literature, "Rocky Fork." There is not a slipshod line in anything signed by her, and her historical details are absolutely accurate. This was attested by that most painstaking of historians, Francis Parkman. In "Lazarre" she has taken up the singularly fascinating tradition that the Dauphin of France was stolen and taken to America during the last years of the French revolution, and lived to be an old man in this country. Many people past middle life will remember having heard this vague and curious rumor, which had really an historical basis; and it is the character of this man, Eleazar Williams, or "Lazarre," as he was called by the Indians, which forms the central figure of the romance.

MRS. MARY H. CATHERWOOD.

GILBERT PARKER.

Sir Gilbert Parker.

Gilbert Parker, lately knighted, is the only other historical novelist who has done much with Canadian history, and his work needs no recommendation to anyone who has read a page of it. "The Right of Way," of course, leads the list of his books in popularity, but there are half a dozen others, less well known, which are almost equal in charm. "Pierre and His People," "A Romance of the Snows," "The Seats of the Mighty," "The Battle of the Strong," and an exquisite little volume of verse, "A Lover's Diary" are all worth the attention of those not familiar with them. It is quite safe to prophesy, however, that the best work of this novelist is to come. He is still young, as the age of a writer goes; he possesses stores of experience and observation which have not yet been even touched in writing; and he has the artistic sensibility and reverence for his work which will not allow him to give less than his best to the world. Such a man will do his best work, as a rule, when past middle life. He once said, in conversation, that he could not understand the spirit which led a man to regard his experiences and sensations merely as merchandise. "I have been nearly all over the world," he said, "and, of course, spent a great deal of money and time in travel, and if I didn't have a conscience, if I regarded my work merely as a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence, I might produce photographic fiction. But the only true realism is that which uses details simply to fulfill an ideal conception." It is this intense devotion to the ideal which has given us the poetry, passion, and reality of "The Right of Way."

Canadian Literature.

Canada is, in fact, developing a school of literature of her own, second to none on this continent, and only comparable in strength and originality to that of the Middle West. The chief characteristic of the Canadian is deep poetic feeling. The little group of Canadian poets has produced work which shows this. Archibald Lampman, now dead, was the first of this school to attract attention by his nature poetry. Then followed Charles G. D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, and three or four others of less note. Prof. Roberts is also the author of two or three charming Canadian novels, and his latest book, "The Kindred of the Wild," is altogether the best nature book of the season. It appeared in the late spring, and is a collection of stories of animals of the Canadian forest. The tales have all the sympathetic tenderness of "The Heart of the Ancient Wood," the best-known of his stories, and most of them are hardly fiction at all, being evidently records of actual events. The owl, "Hush-wing," and the moose, "King of the Mamozekel," and the lynx, "the haunter of the pine gloom," have all the vivid reality of persons of actual acquaintance. The illustrations, by Charles Livingston Bull, are alone worth the price of the book. For students of nature there could not be a better companion.

Another Canadian writer who is bound to enlarge his reputation is W. A. Fraser, whose versatility is one of his salient qualities. Mr. Fraser has written animal books also, his "Mooswa" and "The Outcasts" coming under this head. His first book, "The Eye of the God," was a remarkably clever collection of Anglo-Indian tales. His latest and perhaps his most ambitious novel is now running as a serial in the "New York Sun," and is entitled "Thoroughbreds."

It is a story of the races, and will appeal to every horse lover in the country, and to a good many people who are not particularly keen on horses, because there is plenty of human nature in it as well as technique. The heroine of this tale is a spirited, charming and high-principled girl, daughter of the owner of a stock farm. She has been brought up among horses and loves them as only such a girl can love a horse. She inherits all her father's delight in racing and his knowledge of the thoroughbred, and withal she is not a bit like the sporting character one sometimes finds in English novels. It would be spoiling the reader's pleasure in the story to forecast the plot; but it may be said that the hero's heroic qualities are more moral than physical, and that he wins the love of his lady, not by any herculean feats of strength, but by recklessly sacrificing himself to save her brother's good name. It is refreshing to find just that sort of a hero in a story with as much vigor of action as Mr. Fraser's. Most novelists, after creating a heroine of spirit, assume that the man of her choice must be able, metaphorically, to knock her down with a club and carry her off to his cave. As a matter of fact, such a girl is the product of this particular age, and she demands as her mate a man who is at least civilized enough to understand her, not a barbarian who will master her by main force. As to the technique of the book, Mr. Fraser has taken particular care that this shall be correct. He spent some time in Washington during the racing season, in order to see that every detail, slang and all, should be in keeping with the atmosphere of his book. He has already written many racing stories, whose scenes were laid in England and in India, but this is his first important work of the kind dealing with American life.

COL. GEORGE B. McCLELLAN HARVEY.

A Fake Novel.

In striking contrast to the accuracy of the Canadian and Middle Western writers is the slipshod performance of Mr. Owen Wister, whose book, "The Virginian," has won success considerably more by hit than any good wit. It is some time since a more remarkable collection of inaccuracies has been strung on a plot and entitled literature. The pity of it is that Mr. Wister has spoilt a lot of good material, very much as old ladies sometimes cut pretty fabrics into scraps for crazy quilts. The cowboy life of Wyoming, Montana, and Colorado is as picturesque and as evanescent material as the life of the forty-niners. It is already losing much of its unique fascination. If Mr. Wister had gone at his task with any conscience he might have done really valuable work.

The facts appear to be something like this: The litterateur in question was a tenderfoot who strayed into Wyoming for his health, saw that there was money to be made off the characters and customs of the place, and gathering up scraps here and there, put them together according to his own fancy. He establishes a frog marsh in a region where there is nothing but alkali desert. He sets cowboys to digging ditches when the real cowboy would not consider such a proposition for half a minute. He sends his hero East with a train load of cattle and a crew of refractory cowpunchers, when in reality, about three men would be required to do the work of taking care of that consignment of cattle, and they would be individuals anxious to get to Chicago and stay there. The heroics of that chapter are about as realistic as a scarecrow.

He is even less fortunate in the character of his heroine. He has pitched on New Hampshire as her birthplace, apparently because New Hampshire and Virginia make a dramatic combination, but no descendants of General Stark ever talked or wrote as she and her family do. Mr. Wister should not have made the mistake of thinking that the educated people of New Hampshire know as little about the West as he apparently does. This might have been forgiven; but when he makes Miss Molly Wood threaten to renounce her lover on the eve of marriage he takes all the backbone out of her character. A Puritan maiden of the type described might have been incapable of falling in love with the Virginian, but once betrothed she would have stuck to him if he had waded to her through gore. According to a recently quoted letter of Mr. Wister, however, inaccuracy is not a sin which lies heavy on his conscience. He admits that in one of his earlier works he said that Indians "screamed like vultures," and that he has since discovered that vultures do not scream. The time to have discovered that was before making the comparison. It is unfortunate that so promising a region as the Rocky Mountains should have been partly preempted by just this kind of a scribbler. It is to be hoped that other fiction will be written describing the cowboy as he is and was, in a way which will not set on edge the teeth of the people of Wyoming.

A Delightful Biography.

Among the biographies of the season one of the best and most entertaining was that of William Black, by Sir Wemyss Reid, which came out a short time ago. The author has written biographies of two or three other famous men of let-

The Canadian School of Authors----Some of the Poets and Novelists From Across the Line----The Characteristics of Canadian Literature---W. A. Fraser's New Novel---Reid's Life of William Black.

ters, and has for this work the very important qualification of good taste. His life of Black was entirely free from the offensive familiarity of tone which is too noticeable in some works of this

OWEN WISTER.

nature. At the same time it was perfectly plain that he was on intimate terms with the novelist, and the book is full of the fascinating little details which make up the chief attraction of biography for the ordinary reader. In addition to this, he had a peculiarly delightful subject. William Black was one of the most likable of men, albeit of so reserved a nature that he did not easily make friends, and was sometimes misunderstood by people of a temperament uncongenial to his own. As those who have read his books are aware, he had humor, imagination, and sympathy enough for two or three men, and delightful as these qualities are in his novels, one can see in this biography that they must have been even more charming to those who were fortunate enough to enjoy his friendship.

WILLIAM BLACK.

It is always interesting to the uninitiated to know how a work of art is produced; and there is much of this sort of information in the book. One can see plainly the experiences which went to the making of "Shandon Bells," "White Heather," "Macleod of Dare," "A Princess of Thule," and "In Far Lochaber," albeit the "originals" of the various characters, if there were any such individuals, are not revealed to the public.

Some Other Books.

But there is plenty of good literature among the season's successes, and this is about the only out and out imposition in the collection. For those who like sensational melodrama there is Conan Doyle's "Hound of the Baskervilles," than which he has done nothing better. Hallie Erminie Rives' "Hearts Courageous," while it does not merit all the extravagant praise of the advertisements, is a good story and worth reading. "The Story of Mary MacLane" possesses the unique distinction of being the only book of the season which has made its way without a line of advertising. It has advertised itself. Moreover, from the interviews with the young lady, published during her progress across the country, it plainly appears that her personality is not only unusual, but pleasing. She is said to be a modest, gentle, and refined girl; and it is safe to say, moreover, that people who read the book itself instead of the sensational extracts from it which have been printed will like it better than they thought they would.

Lucy Meacham Thruston's novel, "A Girl of Virginia" is a charming and dainty story for those who like simple, wholesome fiction without any melodrama. Her heroine is a particularly delightful character. Eleanor Hoyt has achieved a distinct success in her "Misdemeanors of Nancy." Nobody can help enjoying that book. It is fresh, original, and full of bubbling, sparkling humor and exquisite femininity.

"The Beau's Comedy," published by the Harpers, is another bewitching bit of comedy fiction, by Carrie Harper and Beulah Marie Dix.

The House of Harper.

The Harpers, by the way, are apparently regaining the prestige which it was rumored they were in danger of losing for a time. Perhaps the rumor was not worth circulating; at any rate, the present head of the house has smashed it. Mr. George B. McClellan Harvey is fully sustaining the traditions of the oldest and one of the best American publishing houses. This firm has paid particular attention of late to bringing out new writers of American fiction. This is something of an innovation, for some fifteen or twenty years ago it was noticeable that much of the serial fiction in the magazine as well as the books published by the firm were by foreign authors. It was the Harpers who introduced to American readers Dickens, Thackeray, William Black, R. D. Blackmore, George du Maurier, and a dozen other English writers, as well as one or two French authors. Apparently the new policy is to develop native talent, and that is a good thing.

A STORY OF THE WAR OF 1812.

That veteran story-teller, W. O. Stoddard, has come into view with a new book, entitled, "The Errand Boy of Andrew Jackson." To those who have read any of Mr. Stoddard's books his name will be a sufficient testimonial of the excellence of the tale. To those who have not, it may be said that it is a bright, live, interesting story, full of human nature, and containing some useful facts.

Most of this author's books have dealt with boys, but unhistoric boys, in exciting situations and interesting relations with one another. "Dab Kinzer," "Among the Lakes," and "Saltillo Boys," are among the stories in which boy life is pictured with a vigor as far removed from the Sunday-school book style as from that of the dime novel. The heroes of these tales were manly, bright, human youngsters, full of fun and mischief, ready for all sorts of pranks, and bound to the service of no particular moral, except the general principle that a fellow should do the square thing, and have as good a time as possible. "Talking Leaves," and "Two Arrows" were stories of life among the Indians, and extremely fascinating in their way. The present book has for its hero a Tennessee boy, whose father, having fought under Jackson, and being himself crippled, sends his sixteen-year-old son to represent him in the great campaign which ended in the successful defense of New Orleans against the British army, under Pakenham.

Dan Martin is a little more of a hero, and a little bit more apocryphal than some of his predecessors created by Mr. Stoddard's pen, but he is no more so than the heroes of most historical novels. The story moves briskly, with an abundance of lively incidents and pithy sayings, and skillful character drawing. Among the adventures of Dan is a journey down the Mississippi in company with an Indian warrior, a runaway negro, and one of Jackson's officers, and a Baratarian pirate, to carry a message to the famous Lafitte. Of course, he takes part in the fight over the cotton bales, and in various other adventures of the time. The glimpses given of the character of General Jackson are particularly good. (Boston: D. Lothrop & Co.)

TOURING PARTY OF AUTHORS.

A curiously assorted party of authors is at present traveling through Switzerland under the literary chaperonage, so to speak, of Mr. S. S. McClure. Among those of the party whose names are well known in the book world are Miss Ida M. Tarbell, the historian and magazine writer; Miss Josephine Dodge Daskam, whose stories of children, collected and published under the title of "The Madness of Philip," have aroused widespread attention and amusement; Miss Edith Wyatt, author of "Everyone His Own Way;" George Douglas (Browne), the young author whose first novel, "The House With the Green Shutters," has so astonished the critics, and Robert Barr, author of "Tekla," "In the Midst of Alarms," "A Prince of Good Fellows," and other novels. The party will spend several weeks together climbing mountains and tramping. In respect to pedestrian ability they are ill-assorted. Miss Tarbell and Miss Daskam are both athletic and are good walkers. Miss Wyatt is of the other type, prone to mental rather than physical exertion. Mr. Browne is a famous pedestrian, and has tramped over a quarter of Europe. Robert Barr is said by his friends to be the most reposeful man, physically, in England. It would seem that Mr. McClure might have difficulties with his flock.

LITERARY NOTES.

Frank Stockton's Tact.

Last winter, while Will N. Harben was writing "Abner Daniel" (Harpers), he often met Frank R. Stockton at the Author's Club. One afternoon Harben told Mr. Stockton of his new book, and added that he had been trying to get up his courage to ask to be allowed to send it to him when it was published. Stockton assured Mr. Harben that he would be glad to see it, but just then another novelist sauntered across the room and said:

"Frank, D—— has just sent me a copy of his last book and wants me to review it. I suppose you are often bored with similar requests?"

It was an awkward moment for Stockton and Harben, but the former was equal to the emergency.

"Well," he said, carelessly, "it is rather hard to write reviews of books for friends when one is busy writing novels, but I do certainly like to read books written by men I know."

The conversation took a turn, and Harben walked away. He thought the matter had passed out of the mind of the genial humorist, but a few minutes later Stockton came to him and said:

"I don't want you to forget to send me that book. I am really interested in it." But Mr. Stockton never lived to receive the promised "first copy." He died while Mr. Harben was reading the proofs of the novel.

A Study of Prose Fiction.

"A Study of Prose Fiction," by Bliss Perry, editor of the "Atlantic Monthly," is announced for early publication by Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co. The aim of this book is to discuss the outlines of the art of fiction—not to sketch the history of the English novel. In writing it, the author has followed his notes prepared a few years ago for a course of lectures on prose fiction at Princeton University.

The Story of Santa Claus.

"The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus" is the title of the new children's book by Mr. L. Frank Baum, that will appear in September. The idea of the story of Santa Claus is a novel one that will appeal to all children. There will be twenty full page pictures in colors, from paintings made by Mary Cowden Clark.

How He Met the Crisis.

When David Graham Phillips, author of "Her Serene Highness," was a very young man, he applied for work on a Cincinnati paper.

"What can you do?" said the editor.

"I can try anything," replied the young man.

Thinking to rid himself of further importunities for an assignment, the editor said:

"Well, write an article on bread."

It was a trying moment for the ambitious youngster, but he never flinched. All that night he collected material, and the next day reported to the surprised editor with a bright and newsy article on "The Bakeries of Cincinnati."

The young reporter was immediately engaged.

Darwin's Letters.

There ought to be wide interest in the news that some new letters by Charles Darwin will be published this fall. Darwin's "Life and Letters" appeared many years ago, but a considerable mass of other correspondence has been brought to light, and the Messrs. Appleton expect to have the book ready in ample season for the fall trade.

Everything that Darwin wrote bore the impress of his sincere and gentle spirit. Even his most learned treatises disclosed the man as very charming. In these letters readers are sure to meet with that attractive personality which no one that ever came under its spell can forget.

Some Poems.

"The Poems of Frances Guignard Gibbes" is a book of verse which may be called literary impressionism, since it consists simply of moods, more or less fleeting, embodied in form more or less strictly poetic. Some of it is blank verse, there are a few sonnets, and two or three lyrics. (Washington: The Neale Publishing Company.)

A New Washington Novel.

I. K. Friedman is said to be engaged on a novel whose scene is laid in Washington.

Original Ideas in Stories.

Miss Mary E. Wilkins is writing a series of unique short stories in which romances are cleverly woven about certain trees which are made to figure significantly in each story. "The Great Pine" appeared in the August "Bazar." A similar design was carried out by this author in her "Understudies," published last year by the Harpers, though in this case animals were used to give the keynotes to the clever stories. Miss Wilkins is spending the summer in Magnolia, Mass.

Sherlock Holmes.

Since the revival of "Sherlock Holmes" his creator has had many letters demanding further exploits and suggesting the nature of them. Several of the cases suggested are actual murder mysteries of past years which still remain unsolved. Some of Dr. Doyle's correspondents call loudly for a love story of which Sherlock Holmes shall be the hero. It is said, however, that the distinguished author thoroughly distrusts his ability to handle love interest, and prefers to deal with models of a different kind.

Books for Children.

Little, Brown & Co. have just added the following volumes to their popular "Children's Friend Series" of 12mo., cloth-covered, 50-cent juveniles: "Pansies and Water Lilies," by Louisa M. Alcott; "The Doll's Journey," by Louisa M. Alcott; "A Very Ill-Tempered Family," by Juliana H. Ewing; "Snap Dragons," by Juliana H. Ewing; "The Little Women Play," and "The Little Men Play," adapted from Miss Alcott's stories by Elizabeth L. Gould.

Light Literature.

Novel readers who dislike carrying heavy cloth books in dress suit cases will ease their minds on learning that the New Amsterdam Book Company will publish this month in red paper covers "Joan of the Sword Hand," by S. R. Crockett; "Three Men on Wheels," by Jerome K. Jerome; "Tristram of Blent," by Anthony Hope, and "Captain Fanny," by W. Clark Russell.

THE BOWERY AND VERMONT

"The Little Citizen," by M. E. Waller, is a juvenile romance with some pronounced merits and a good many pronounced defects. The hero is Miffins, a Bowery youngster, who is crippled in an accident and is sent to a Vermont farm to spend a year or two. The story ends in his adoption into the family of the farmer.

The merits of the story are liveliness, spice, wholesome tone, some humor, and a gentle and kindly spirit. Its defects are mostly artistic, and may be summed up under the head of unreality. It looks as if this author were one of the many people who believe that realism has no place in a child's story, and that everything should be made roseate and optimistic. It is a fact that children do not usually like what a New York journalist once called "teary tales," but neither do they like to have everything made too easy. They resent that precisely as older people do, though they cannot express their thoughts in like pungent language.

The character of Miffins is pretty good, on the whole, though more Bowery might have been put into the youngster without injuring the story. The character of his neighbor and playmate, Nancy, is quite as good, though she becomes preternaturally pious toward the end of the tale. It may also be noted that in the society described "Nance" is quite out of fashion as a nickname. If a girl in the farming region of Vermont were so unfortunate as to be named Nancy she would surely be called Nannie from babyhood. The central idea of the character of John Anstey, the Fifth Avenue reformer, who comes up to the Green Mountain hamlet to teach school, is also very good, though Vermont would not be a very good place for the complaint from which Mr. Anstey is supposed to be suffering.

But the pictures of Vermont life are altogether too rosy. There is just as much kindliness and heartiness in that region as the author describes, but it does not come out in the English peasant fashion of the book. The tale is a little too much like "Ministering Children" to be American, and the Vermont farmer does not take to having his condition ameliorated with quite the meekness described. In short, the local color is not right, and the book would have to be made over in order to make it right. The first half is a great deal better than the last half in that respect. Boston: D. Lothrop & Co.)

NATURE MYTHS.

Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co. will publish in September a volume of stories for children, entitled, "The Book of Nature Myths," by Miss Florence Holbrook, of the Forestville School, Chicago, Ill. It is a book for beginners in reading, designed to follow the author's popular "Hiawatha Primer," and is written from a carefully graded vocabulary built up on that of this earlier book. The first myth contains only such words as are to be found in the primer, with the addition of the conventional six or seven new words that it is proper to bring into each lesson; the next adds more new words, and so on with the other myths. The stories tell simply and interestingly the fancies of the early childlike peoples about the everyday facts of life—"Why the Sea is Salt," "Why the Woodpecker's Head is Red," "Why the Bear Has a Short Tail," "Why the Evergreen Trees never lose their Leaves," and so on, reminding one of Kipling's "'Just So' Stories" or Joel Chandler Harris' "Br'er Rabbit."